

The Stories Behind the Photos

Thursday, November 29, 2012

•
•
•





[SEE MORE PHOTOS FROM THE CIE PHOTO CONTEST>>](#)

Each of the winning photos in the UNH Center for International Education (CIE) Fall 2012 Photo Contest tells a story on its own. But there are stories behind those photos too: a precarious photo shoot from the back of a camel, a friendship with a machete-wielding village girl, a lesson in putting down the camera and being present in the moment.

The three winning photos were selected from among 79 entries taken by students studying all over the globe in the school's study abroad program. The twice-annual contest is judged by popular vote on Facebook. Winners get a monetary award and have their photos featured on the CIE website. A selection of matted, framed prints from the contest will be on display soon in the Dimond Library. "We really worked very hard to cover all the continents and all the different programs," said Wen Houle, who coordinates the contest.



ASHLEY SCHEIDEGGER '13

How did Ashley Scheidegger capture the perfect moment in her award-winning photo, "[Spoken Through Gesture?](#)" By letting the curious children on Kokrobite Beach play with her camera.

This wasn't just point-and-shoot technology at work, though. What makes this snapshot feel so natural, so authentic and spontaneous is that it is. Scheidegger, who spent last semester studying in Ghana, never tired of playing with the children who seemed to surround her everywhere she went.

"It was pretty cool to them that I wasn't native," said Scheidegger, who will graduate in January with a degree in psychology. "They really liked my camera, and they wanted to play with my hair because it was so different."

Scheidegger spent the semester working with children with developmental disabilities in a school called Awaawaa 2, a primitive institution with few books, no air conditioning and just a few broken toys to play with. It was a lesson in resourcefulness for the Newton, New Hampshire, native, who plans to work with children facing various types of adversity. "There's not a lot of awareness there. Unfortunately, a lot of children who

have disabilities aren't treated, and only the most severe cases receive any kind of help at all," she said. "Many are treated as though they're bewitched and are terribly misbehaved."

To wash off the stress, Scheidegger loved to travel around the village and hang out at the beach. Here, as in the school, she found simple ways to engage the children, making up hand-clap games and playing in the sand. She had been playing with the girl in the picture, a 10-year-old named Julie, for an hour or two when Julie's sister snapped the award-winning photo.

"We were just kind of hanging out," Scheidegger said. "She was just a peppy little girl wanting to play and have fun."



COURTNEY PERRON '13

between the Bay of Benin and the Volta Delta, is only accessible by canoe and just wide enough for one or two lines of grass huts. The natives make their living by welcoming students and other visitors such as Perron.

"Sometimes there's power, sometimes not. There are no toilets or anything, and you sleep on a mattress on the sand with a bug net," said the Weare, N.H., native, who will graduate in the spring with a degree in social work and wants to work with refugees. "In the morning you meet with the cook to tell her what you want for dinner because it will take her all day to make it. . . We'd have big bonfires at night and float around in the water with the kids during the day."

Perron got to know a lot of the kids on the peninsula, including the girl in the photo (whose name she never learned). The girl could usually be found carrying a machete around the camp looking for ripe coconuts to pluck from the palm trees and cut up for

The young girl plunging her face into the water in Courtney Perron's photo, ["River Meets the Sea."](#) could be a symbol of Perron herself during her semester in Ghana.

As part of her social work classes at the University of Ghana, Perron was called upon to do things she never could have done in the United States without extensive training and a license. "I was counseling people who'd just been diagnosed with HIV," she said. "I had to just jump in and do it. The experience was more educational than any class I've taken."

During her time off, Perron loved to visit Maranatha Beach Camp in Ada Foah, a tiny peninsula that's still inhabited and run by Ghana natives. The rare slice of un-commercialized beachfront, situated

visitors. When she got thirsty, she would simply plunge her head in the river and take a drink.

“She was just there, in her element, and I thought there was something really beautiful about it,” Perron said. “It seemed like such a natural act for her.”



MAYA MIATKOWSKI '13

Andover, Mass., and will graduate in the spring with a justice studies/forensic science degree.

Nevertheless, the desert junket, like the rest of Miatkowski's semester abroad, was as thrilling as she imagined. “We stayed in a tent in the desert and slept in the sand with the camels,” she said. “It was amazing and I talk about it all the time.”

Miatkowski spent her semester in Berlin, Germany, where she took on a task more challenging than camel riding: improving her fluency in the German language. Born to Polish immigrants, she had grown up speaking Polish and always enjoyed learning languages. But she'd never had the chance to immerse herself in the culture of a language. “Between the classes I took and being around Germans all the time, my German really improved,” she said.

Miatkowski also fell in love with Berlin and its alluring mix of ultra-modern sensibility and derelict chic. One day she climbed an old American spy tower on a giant hill overlooking the city. On another she and her friends found an old abandoned East Berlin amusement park. “It was so cool,” she said. “It just looked like somebody had hit the off button one day and left.”

The back of a camel is not an optimal perch for shooting a photo, as Maya Miatkowski found out. After spending the night in the Sahara desert, Miatkowski and her friends got up in the wee hours to reach the bus that would take them back into Marrakech, Morocco.

“I was on the first camel in the whole set of camels. The sun was rising, and I noticed how everyone was turned in the shadows,” Miatkowski said. “And I thought, ‘oh my God, I need to get this.’”

What the resulting, award-winning photo ["Saharan Sunrise"](#) doesn't show is that Miatkowski nearly slipped off her camel in the process of shooting it.

“Camels are not easy to ride. They are also very uncomfortable in case you were wondering,” said Miatkowski, who is from

Originally published by:

UNH Today

Written by Sarah Earle

GLOBAL REACH



University of New Hampshire

UNH Today is produced for the UNH community and for friends of UNH.

The stories are written by the staff of [UNH Communications and Public Affairs](#).

Email us: unhtoday.editor@unh.edu.

[MANAGE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

Like us on Facebook

Follow us on Twitter

Follow us on YouTube

Follow us on Instagram

Find us on LinkIn

UNH Today RSS feeds

UNH Today • UNH Main Directory: 603-862-1234

Copyright © 2021 • TTY Users: 7-1-1 or 800-735-2964 (Relay NH)

[USNH Privacy Policies](#) • [USNH Terms of Use](#) • [ADA Acknowledgement](#)